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TWO NAPOLEONIC RELICS.

A PAPER.

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BY THE

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TWO NAPOLEONIC RELICS.

We must all of us have remarked that in the dates which we have been familiarly using for several years past are the exact counterparts, if we substitute eight for seven, of dates with which we are very familiar as having been those of events of a striking character, occurring just at the close of the last century. It seems a very little while ago since we were using the dates 1889-92-94, and we could not help being reminded thereby of similar dates, 1789, storming of the Bastille, 1793-94, the Reign of Terror, and other dates marking dreadful events in the drama not yet entirely played out, known as the French Revolution.

We also here in Western Canada have had several centennial celebrations lately, that of the organization of the Province of Upper Canada, for example, and holding of its first Parliament in 1792, the laying out of York, i.e., Toronto, in 1793, and so forth, and in this year, 1895, we recall the close of the ever-memorable administration of Governor Simcoe in 1795.

How unaware were our forefathers of the startling events which were occurring in Europe at the very moment when they were acting and moving and making their mark on the soil of Canada here; and it is often well for us for our comfort and peace of mind, that we are not made acquainted with things that are happening at particular moments just outside our own sphere.

By a curious engraving which I happen to possess, I am reminded that about this time 100 years ago Napoleon Bonaparte was beginning to be the terror of Western Europe.

In three-years' time from 1795 he was seriously threatening England with invasion at the head of an overwhelming force. It was simply at the moment, perhaps, only a pretence just to spread alarm and to cover ulterior designs. He collected at St. Malo, on the coast of Brittany, in France, an immense force, naval and military, ostensibly for the invasion of England; but in reality it was probably from the very outset intended simply to mask the attack upon Egypt, which he suddenly made in the year 1798, and which was so gallantly checkmated by Nelson at the Battle of the Nile.

It is in connection with the gathering of an armament for the alleged invasion of England that the old engraving in my possession has an interest. I have accordingly determined to exhibit it to you. It was found among the papers of my father, who, I know, set a particular value upon it as having been secured by him at the time of the great alarm felt in England at the prospect of an invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte. Moreover, it may not be inappropriate to do so in that the name and fame of Napoleon are at the present time undergoing a revival in consequence of the simultaneous publication of illustrated memoirs of Napoleon in several popular periodicals.

The print to which I refer professes to give a view of a huge raft as seen

afloat at St. Malo in February, 1798, and was "published February 13, 1798, by John Fairburn, No. 146 Minories, London." This engraving represents the apparatus for conveying the expedition to the shores of England, consisting of a kind of gigantic ferry raft, bearing in the midst apparently a bomb-proof, metal-sheathed citadel and surmounted by a tall mast, bearing a flag somewhat resembling the tri-color of later years.

The whole raft is supposed to be propelled forward by means of four engines contained in the same number of low towers, situated two at each end: each engine turns a paddle-wheel of large diameter, set in motion by a contrivance of six horizontal sweeps placed on the top of the towers, so as to be acted upon by the wind after the manner of the great sweeps of a windmill, only moving not vertically, but as we have said horizontally.

We have here paddle-wheel propulsion of very large vessels, anticipated with wind instead of steam as the moving agent.

On the flat floor of the raft are seen squadrons of cavalry proceeding at full gallop, in perfect order, however, passing across the surface, having entered the great floating affair by a set of draw-bridges at one end, which can evidently be lifted up when the process of embarkation is completed, whilst a corresponding set of drawbridges to be used for debarkation are seen at the other end already hauled up.

They are deploying round and passing into an arched entrance to quarters pro-

vided for them in the basement of the central fortress or citadel.

The engraving before us informs us that this extraordinary structure was 600 feet long by 300 broad, mounts 500 pieces of cannon, 36 and 48-pounders, and is to convey 15,000 troops, etc., for the invasion of England.

In the background is seen the Town of St. Malo, partially lining the shore, with adjoining heights, each crowned with a signal tower and flagstaff. Parkman, in his "Pioneers of France in the New World," page 181, thus describes the town of St. Malo:—

"The ancient town of St. Malo, thrust out like a buttress into the sea, strange and grim of aspect, breathing war from its walls and battlements of rugged stone—a stronghold of privateers, the home of a race whose intractable and defiant independence neither time nor change has subdued—has been for centuries a nursery for hardy mariners."

Parkman then refers to Jacques Cartier, in whom Canadians are so much interested, inasmuch as it was from this port that he sailed on his famous voyage of discovery in the New World, April 20, 1534.

Parkman describes the portrait of Jacques Cartier preserved at St. Malo, now become familiar to all Canadians from Hamel's copy thereof.

Parkman informs us that it shows him as a man of bold, keen features, bespeaking a spirit not apt to quail before the wrath of man or of the elements.

In the account appended to the engraving of the St. Malo raft, it should be subjoined, we are told, that a bomb-

proof arrangement was made for the working of the paddle-wheels by horse-power, whenever the wind apparatus should be unavailable.

It may be added, too, that another great raft, the exact counterpart of the one described, is seen in the distance, putting out to sea, whilst a fleet lies in readiness in the harbor under the heights close by. Whether these formidable appliances for the invasion of England were ever constructed in all their completeness or not may be a question, but it is not improbable that we have in these pictures of them reproductions of adumbrations made in outline by the hand of the clever Engineer Napoleon himself.

After the abortive preparations of 1798 Napoleon still did not relinquish the designs which he had formed for the invasion of England. In the year 1804 he assembled an armament with the same object in view on a vast scale, but on this occasion not at St. Malo, but at the port of Boulogne, nineteen miles south-west of Calais.

In the meantime he had caused himself to be elected Emperor of the French.

His army, which was styled the Army of England, now consisted, it is said, of 180,000 men, and a flotilla of 2,400 transports. Napoleon, fully confident of the success of this renewed attempt on England, had the die of a medal prepared, which was to be struck on his taking possession of London. The engraver was Jeuffroy, the designer was Denon, the device on the reverse was Hercules holding an amphibious monster in the air, half man and half sea-serpent,

crushing it to death. The monster, of course, represented England, and Hercules was France.

In the mind of Napoleon and his artists the wish was doubtless father to the thought, but, as we know, it was not destined to be fulfilled.

The allusion in the device is to the mythological story of the destruction of Antæus by Hercules. Antæus, as the story goes, was the son of Neptune and Terra, and was powerless so long as he was kept from contact with Mother Earth, a contact he was ever desirous of repeating.

I exhibit the engraving of the medal thus described, which appears in Plate V., contained in Edward Edwards' Napoleon Medals, published in London by Paul and Dominic Colnaghi in 1837. At page 15 of that work we are informed that "the dies of this medal were engraved in Paris, at the epoch when the expedition against England was preparing, and were intended to have been employed in London after the taking of that city."

As the expedition did not take place, the medal was never struck. Some impressions, however, in soft metal and fine plaster of Paris were made, and from them at a later period fac similes were derived, copies of which are occasionally found in the cabinets of the curious.

The medal bears the inscription in French, "Descente en Angleterre," i.e., "Attack on England," and below are the words "Frappee a Londres, 1804," i.e., "Struck at London in the year 1804." But London was not captur-

ed. The trained bands of London stood in the way, and more formidable still were the people of the three Kingdoms, linked together as one united phalanx for defence.

It is somewhat singular that a lofty and conspicuous column 164 feet in height should be seen to this day on the heights above Boulogne, recalling the memory of Napoleon's quixotic ideas in regard to the annexation of England to the Empire of France.

How noble is the future which offers itself to the British Empire throughout the globe, could its sons everywhere be induced to dwell together in unity, and on every critical occasion to act like their forefathers when a tyrant sought to lay a yoke upon their necks. In this way, what Shakespeare said of the limited England of his time will be fulfilled in the case of the greater England of to-day, and still more in the case of the vaster and more compact British Empire of the following ages.

I close with a portion of his words to be found at the end of the famous tragedy of "King John," making therein the verbal change of "the Empire" for England:

"This Empire never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror."
* * * * *

Come the three corners of the world in
arms,

And we shall shock them. Nought shall
make us rue,

Let but the Empire to itself rest true."